

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method of authenticating configuration data within or about a gaming machine with respect to a gaming machine boot process, the method comprising:

providing a central processing unit for use in conjunction with the gaming machine, said central processing unit designed or configured to execute executable programming instructions for generating a wager-based game on the gaming machine;

providing a memory device used in conjunction with the gaming machine, said memory device storing the executable programming instructions for generating the wager-based game;

providing a volatile programmable electronic device for use in conjunction with the gaming machine, said volatile programmable electronic device comprising a plurality of logic elements programmable to form logic gates, said volatile programmable electronic device disposed in a communication path between the central processing unit and the memory device;

providing a configurator for use in conjunction with the gaming machine, said configurator including a read only configuration file, said configuration file comprising instructions for configuring the volatile programmable electronic device to enable communications between the central processing unit and the memory device;

providing a separate read only custodial file for use in conjunction with the gaming machine, wherein at least a substantial portion of said custodial file is identical to at least a substantial portion of said configuration file when said configuration file is authentic, said custodial file residing in a location separate from said configurator;

holding the operating contents of said volatile programmable electronic device as substantially empty upon a shut down phase of said gaming machine to disable communication between the central processing unit and the memory device;

booting up said gaming machine after said shut down phase;

transferring said configuration file from said configurator to said volatile programmable electronic device;

configuring said volatile programmable electronic device with said configuration file;

comparing at least a representative portion of data from said configuration file with at least a representative portion of data from said custodial file;

confirming whether said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file ~~to a sufficient level of satisfaction; and~~

permitting a substantial amount of regular gaming machine operations only after a successful confirming step; and

facilitating communication between said memory device and said central processing unit upon determining that said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of providing a configurator includes providing a configurator that comprises a memory unit.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein said step of providing a configurator includes providing a configurator having a memory unit that comprises a standard Read Only Memory.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein said step of providing a configurator includes providing a configurator having a memory unit that comprises an Electrical Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of providing a volatile programmable electronic device includes providing a volatile programmable electronic device that comprises a Field Programmable Gate Array.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of providing a volatile programmable electronic device includes providing a volatile programmable electronic device that comprises a Simple Programmable Logic Device or a Complex Programmable Logic Device.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said central processing unit, said volatile programmable electronic device and said configurator all reside within the gaming machine.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said comparison step is performed by said central processing unit.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said custodial file is located within said central processing unit.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

confirming whether said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file ~~to a sufficient level of satisfaction.~~

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said confirming step is performed prior to said transferring step.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said configurator is located within said central processing unit.

13. (Currently amended) A microprocessor based gaming machine, comprising:

a central processing unit designed or configured to execute executable programming instructions used to generate a wager-based game on the microprocessor based gaming machine;

a memory device used in conjunction with the microprocessor based gaming machine, said memory device configured to store the executable programming instructions for generating the wager-based game;

a volatile programmable electronic device, said volatile programmable electronic device comprising a plurality of logic elements programmable to form logic gates, said volatile programmable volatile programmable electronic device disposed in a communication path between the central processing unit and the memory device;

a configurator;

a read only configuration file located within said configurator and adapted to be used in configuring said volatile programmable electronic device, said read only configuration file comprising instructions for configuring the volatile programmable electronic device to enable communications between the central processing unit and the memory device;

a separate custodial file located within the microprocessor based gaming machine and separate from said configurator, wherein at least a substantial portion of said separate custodial file is identical to at least a substantial portion of said configuration file; and

a comparator designed to compare at least a representative portion of data from said configuration file with at least a representative portion of data from said custodial file in order to authenticate said configuration file, said comparator adapted to provide a signal to said central processing unit regarding the results of said comparison, said volatile

programmable electronic device configured to facilitate communication between said memory device and said central processing unit based on the results of said comparison.

14. (Original) The microprocessor based gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said volatile programmable electronic device comprises a Field Programmable Gate Array.

15. (Original) The microprocessor based gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said configurator comprises an Electrical Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory.

16. (Original) The microprocessor based gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said comparator is located within said central processing unit.

17. (Original) The microprocessor based gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said custodial file is located within said central processing unit.

18. (Original) The microprocessor based gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said configurator is located within said central processing unit.

19. (Currently amended) A method of authenticating configuration data in a microprocessor based machine during a machine boot process, comprising:

providing a central processing unit, said central processing unit designed or configured to execute executable programming instructions for generating a wager-based game on the microprocessor based machine;

providing a memory device used in conjunction with the microprocessor based machine, said memory device storing the executable programming instructions for generating the wager-based game;

holding the operating contents of a primary volatile programmable electronic device associated with the microprocessor based machine as substantially empty upon a shut down phase of the microprocessor based machine, said holding the operating contents of the primary volatile programmable electronic device associated with the microprocessor based machine as substantially empty is performed to disable communication between the central processing unit and the memory device, said primary volatile programmable electronic device comprising a plurality of logic elements programmable to form logic gates, said volatile

programmable volatile programmable electronic device disposed in a communication path between the central processing unit and the memory device;

booting up the microprocessor based machine after said shut down phase;

transferring a read only configuration file from a memory device associated with the microprocessor based machine to said volatile programmable electronic device, said read only configuration file comprising instructions for configuring the volatile programmable electronic device to enable communications between the central processing unit and the memory device;

configuring said volatile programmable electronic device with said configuration file;

comparing at least a representative portion of data from said configuration file with at least a representative portion of data from a separate custodial file,

wherein at least a substantial portion of said separate custodial file is identical to at

least a substantial portion of said configuration file,

and wherein said separate custodial file resides in a location separate from said memory device;

confirming whether said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file ~~to a sufficient level of satisfaction; and~~

permitting a substantial amount of regular microprocessor based machine operations only after a successful confirming step; and

facilitating communication between said memory device and said central processing unit upon determining that said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file.

20. (Currently amended) A method of authenticating data in a microprocessor based machine, comprising:

providing a CPU within with the microprocessor based machine, said CPU designed or configured to execute executable programming instructions for generating a wager-based game on the microprocessor based machine;

providing a memory device within the microprocessor based machine, said memory device storing the executable programming instructions for generating the wager-based game;

providing an FPGA within with the microprocessor based machine, said FPGA comprising a plurality of logic elements programmable to form logic gates, said FPGA disposed in a communication path between the central processing unit and the memory device;

providing a configuring EEPROM within with the microprocessor based machine;
storing a configuration file within said EEPROM, said configuration file comprising instructions for configuring the FPGA to enable communications between the central processing unit and the memory device;

storing a separate custodial file within the microprocessor based machine and separate from said EEPROM, wherein at least a substantial portion of said separate custodial file is identical to at least a substantial portion of said configuration file;

holding the operating contents of said FPGA as substantially empty upon a shut down phase of the microprocessor based machine to disable communication between the central processing unit and the memory device;

booting up the microprocessor based machine;

initiating a request to transfer said configuration file from said EEPROM to said FPGA;

utilizing said CPU to compare at least a representative portion of data from said configuration file with at least a representative portion of data from a separate custodial file;

confirming whether said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file ~~to a sufficient level of satisfaction; and~~ satisfaction;

configuring said FPGA with said configuration file; and

facilitating communication between said memory device and said CPU upon determining that said configuration file has been successfully compared to said custodial file.

21. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising determining not to facilitate communication between said memory device and said central processing unit upon determining that said configuration file has been unsuccessfully compared to said custodial file.